REFLEXIONS ON MONSIEUR FAGEL's LETTER.

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SIR,

I Shall endeavour to answer yours as fully and briefly as possible.

1. You desire to know whether the Letter I sent you be truly Monsieur *Fagel*'s or not.

2. Whether their Highnesses gave him Commission to write it.

3. How far the Dissenters may rely on their Highnesses word.

4. What effects it has on all sorts of People.

Sir, Roman Catholicks may be pardoned if they endeavour to make that Letter pass for an Imposture, it is their Interest so to do, and they are seldom wanting to promote that, let the methods be never so indirect which they are forced to make use of: It does indeed spoil many hopeful projects of theirs. But how any Protestant among us can really doubt the truth of it, is strange to me. Some things carry their own evidence along with them, I take this Letter to be one of that kind. I do not desire you to believe me upon my bare affirmation that I know it to be genuine, (tho this be most true) but shall offer my Reasons to convince you that it cannot be otherways.

First, The Style is like its Author's, the Matter is weighty, the Reasoning solid, the Stile grave, full and clear, like that of a Lawyer: It has an Air all over, which as well shews the Religion and Temper of its Writer, as the Matter and Method of it do his Capacity and Judgment. Now all these Qualities make up the Character of *Monsieur Fagel*.

Secondly, There are the same grounds to believe this Letter to be M. *Fagel*'s, as there are to believe any thing you have not seen, *viz*. The constant Asseverations of Persons of undoubted Credit that come from *Holland*, who all agree in it, and assure us of it. M. *Fagel* own'd it to several English Gentlemen, and many both here and in *Holland* knew two months ago that such a Letter was written; a Forgery would before this time have been detected, especially such a one as ruines the Designs of the Triumphing Party.

Thirdly, It was written by M. *Fagel* in Answer to Letters from Mr. *Stewart*, sent by his Majesties special Orders, and Mr. *Stewart* had both an English and Latin Copy sent him: Therefore the English Copy is not called a Translation, but it is a sort of Original: for you are not to doubt but the matter was ordered so, that her Royal Highness might peruse it as well as his Majesty.

In the next place you would know *whether their Higneſſes gave Order to Monſieur* Fagel *to write it.*

I wish Sir, you would take the pains to read the Letter over again, and consider who this *Monsieur Fagel* is; He is Pensionary of *Holland*, and first Minister of State, raised to that Dignity by the *Prince*'s Favour, he Answers Letters written to him, which are ordered by His Majesty to be Communicated to their Highnesses. In his Answer, he gives an Account of their Higneſſes Opinions about the Repeal of the *Penal Laws* and *Test*; Matters of a National Concern, and of the greatest Importance. Now you must have a strange Opinion of *Monsieur Fagel*, if you think him capable of so great an Indiscretion (or rather Imposture) as to write such a Letter of his own Head. The Letter it self Demonstrates, that whoever writ it is no Fool, and the Circumstances I have marked show that he is no Knave. And indeed the Substance of it is not new, it only repeats to His Majesty the same Answer which the Prince and Princess had formerly given to His Majesties Envoy there.

In short, you may leave the whole Matter to this plain issue: if this Letter be a false one, it will be disown'd, if a true one it will be owned. Their Highnesses love not to do things that will not bear the Light. It is Evident, they did not intend the Matter of it should be a Secret, having told it to *Monsieur D' Albeville*, as often as he (in his Discreet Way) necessitated them to do it. But how it came to be Printed, I cannot inform you justly; however you shall have my conjecture.

I remember, as soon as it was noised about Town, that Mr. *Stewart* had received a Letter of such a Nature from *Monsieur Fagel*, Care was taken, that the Writer of the Common News Letters which are dispersed over the Kingdom, should insert in them, that their Highnesses had declared themselves for the Repeal of the Test. This *Pia Fraus* might, I suppose, give Occasion to the Printing of the Letter, as the Wisdom and Policy of our States-men (in putting Mr. *Stewart* on Writing such Letters) had procured it: I say *Letters*, for *Monsieur Fagel* had five or six on that subject before he answered, so unwilling were they in *Holland* to return an Answer, since they could not give one that was pleasing, or to do any thing that look'd like meddling.

The third Thing you desired to be satisfied in, is, *Whether the Dissenters may rely on their Highnesses Word.* I am as apt to mistrust Princes Promises as you are. But shall now give you my reasons, why I think the Dissenters may safely do it. And at the same time, because of the Affinity of the matter, I will tell you why I think we may all rely on their Highnesses for our *Civil Liberties*, as well as the Dissenters may do for *Liberty of Conscience*. Much of what I have to say is equally applicable to them both, yet because I know you have had an Account of Her Royal Highness, better than I can give you, I shall for the most part, speak only of the Prince.

My first Reason is the certainest of all Reasons, That it will be His Highnesses interest to settle matters at Home, which only can be done by a Legal Toleration or Comprehension in Matters of Religion; and by restoring the Civil Liberties of the Nation, so much invaded of late. That this will be his interest is Evident, if his Designs lye abroad, as it's certain they do. Designs at home and abroad at the same time are so inconsistent, that we see His Majesty,

though raised above his Fears at home by His late Victory; and invited abroad, by all that can excite his Appetite for Glory, cannot reconcile them: The truth is, one that would undertake it, is in the same Condition with Officers that beat their men, to make them fight, they have Enemies before and behind.

But you may happily Object, that Princes do not always follow their true Interests, of which it is not difficult in this Age to give several Fatal Instances. I Answer, That it is to be presumed that Princes, as well as other men, will follow their Interests till the contrary appear; and if they be of an Age to have taken their Fold, and have till such an Age kept firm to their Interests, the Presumption grows strong; but if their Inclinations, the Maxims of their Families, the Impressions of their Education, and all their other Circumstances do side with their Interest, and lead them the same way, it is hardly Credible they should ever quit it. Now this being the present Case, we have all the certainty that can be had in such matters.

The Prince of *Orange* has above these 15 years given so great proofs of his Firmness and Resolution, as well as of his Capacity and Conduct in opposing the Grand Ravisher (I may add the Betrayers too) of Liberty and Religion, that he is deservedly (by all Impartial Men) own'd to be the Head of the Protestant Interest: A Headship, which no Princes but the Kings of *England* should have, and none but they would be without it.

Now one may rationally conclude, That when the Prince shall joyn to his present possession of this Headship, a more Natural Title, by being in a greater capacity to Act, he will not degrade himself, nor lay aside Designs and Interests which ought to be the Glory of *England*, as they are indeed the Glory of his Family, acquired and derived to him by the Blood of his Ancestors, and carried on and maintained by himself with so much Honour and Reputation.

I might add here, That the Prince is a Man of a sedate even Temper, full of Thoughts and Reflection: one that precipitates neither in Thinking, Speaking, nor Acting; is cautious in Resolving and Promising, but firm to his Resolutions, and exact in observing his Word: Inform your self, and you'll find this a part of his Character, and conclude from hence what may be presumed from his Inclinations.

Now as to the Maxims of his Family, let us compare them a little where it may be decently done.

The *French* King broke his Faith to his Protestant Subjects, upon this single point of Vain Glory, that he might shew the World he was greater than most of his Predecessors, who though they had the same Inclinations, were not Potent enough to pursue them effectually, as he has done, to the everlasting Infamy of his Name and Reign. The maxims of the *French* Kings have been how to outvie each other, in Robbing their Neighbours, and Oppressing their Subjects by perfidiousness and cruelty. But those of the Family of *Orange*, on the contrary, have been to Rescue *Europe* from its Oppressors, and maintain the Protestant Interest, by Vertue, Truth, Honour and Resolution: knowing that such methods are as necessary to make Protestant Princes and States flourish, as Vice and Oppression are to maintain Popish Government.

No Popish Prince in *Europe* can pretend to have kept his Word to his Protestant Subjects, as the Princes of *Orange* have always done to their Popish Subjects at *Orange*, and elsewhere; and the Papists have often broke their Word to that Family, and have been and are its declared Enemies; and though the Princes two great Grand-Fathers, Admiral *Coligni*, and Prince *William*, were Assassinated by the Authority, and with the Approbation of that whole party, yet it cannot be made appear, that ever the Princes of that Family failed in keeping their Word, even to such Enemies, or used their own Popish Subjects the worse for it, in making distinction between them and their other Subjects, or influenc'd the States to use theirs so: I say the States, who allow their *R. C.* Subjects all the priviledges of their other Subjects, only they are kept by a Test from having any share in the Government, which is truly a kindness done them, considering that ill-natur'd Humour of destroying all those that differ from them, which is apt to break out when that Religion is in power.

Now the Church of *England* may justly expect all sort of protection and countenance from the Successors, when it's their turn to give it, they have a legal right to it, and Impartial Dissenters must acknowledge, that of late they have deserved it.

But as for the Protestant Dissenters, I think no honest man amongst them will Apprehend, that their Highnesses who keep their Word to their popish Enemies, will break it to Protestant Subjects, tho differing from the publick Establishment.

The next thing I am to make good, is, That his Highnesses Education must have infused such principles as side with his Interest: There must be a Fatal Infection in the *English* Crown, if matters miscarry in his Highnesses Hands, his Veins are full of the best Protestant Blood in the World: The Reformation in *France* grew up under the Conduct and Influence of *Coligni*. Prince *William* founded the Government of the Unitnd *Netherlands* on the Basis of property and liberty of Conscience. His Highness was bred and lives in that State which subsists and flourishes by adhering steadily to the maxims of its Founder.

He himself, both in his publick and private concerns, as well in the Government of his Family, and of such principalities as belong to him, as in that of the Army, and in the Dispensing of that great power which the States have given him, has as great regard to Justice, Vertue and true Religion, as may compleat the character of a Prince, qualified to make those he Governs happy.

It does not indeed appear, that their Highnesses have any share of that devouring Zeal which hath so long set the World on fire, and tempted thinking men to have a notion of Religion it self, like that we have of the Ancient Paradice, as if it had never been more than an intended Blessing; but all who have the honour to know their Highnesses and their Inclinations in matters of Religion, are fully satisfied they have a truly Christian Zeal, and as much as is consistent with Knowledge and Charity.

As to his Highnesses circumstances, they will be such when his Stars make way for him, as may convince our Scepticks, that certain persons, times and things, are prepared for one another. I know not why we may not hope, that as his predecessors broke the Yoke of the House of *Austria* from off the Neck of *Europe*; The honour of breaking that of the House of *Bourbon* is reserved for him. I am confident the Nation will heartily joyn with him in his Just Resentments. Resentments which they have with so much

Impatience

Impatience long'd to find, and have miſſed with the greateſt indignation in the Hearts of their Monarchs.

His Highneſs has at preſent, a greater influence on the Councils of the moſt part of the Princes of *Chriſtendom*, than poſſibly any King of *England* ever had. And this acquired by the weight of his own perſonal merit, which will no doubt grow up to a glorious Authority when it is cloath'd with Soveraign power. May I here mention (to lay the Jealouſies of the moſt unreaſonable of your Friends) that his Highneſs will have only a borrowed Title, which we may ſuppoſe will make him more cautious in having deſigns at home, and his wanting Children (to our great misfortune) will make him leſs ſolicitous to have ſuch Deſigns.

But after all, it muſt be acknowledged, that in matters of his Nature, the premiſes may ſeem very ſtrong, and yet the concluſion not follow. Humane infirmities are great, Temptations to Arbitrarineſs are ſtrong, and often both the Spirit and Fleſh weak. Such fatal miſtakes have been made of late, that the Succeſſors themſelves may juſtly pardon mens Jealouſies. A Widow that has had a bad Husband, will cry on her Wedding day, though ſhe would be married with all her heart. But I am confident you will grant to me, that in the caſe of the preſent Succeſſors, the poſſibilities are as remote, and the Jealouſies as ill grounded, and that there is as much to ballance them, as ever there was to be found in the proſpect of any Succeſſors to the Crown of *England*, Now may I add, To conclude the Reaſons that I have given you, why we may depend on their Highneſſes, that I know conſiderable men, who after great Enquiry and Obſervation, do hope that their Highneſſes (being every way ſo well quaiified for ſuch an end) are predeſtinated (if I may ſo ſpeak) to make us happy in putting an end to our Differences, and in fixing the Prerogative, and in recovering the Glory of the Nation, which is ſo much ſunk, and which now (when we were big with Expectations) we find Sacrific'd to unhappy partialities in matters of Religion.

The laſt thing you deſire to know, is, *What Effects this Letter has had.* But it is not yet old enough for me to judge of that, I can better tell you what Effects it ought to have. I find the moderate wiſe men of all Perſwaſions are much pleaſed with it.

I know *Roman Catholicks* that wiſh to God matters were ſetled on the model given in it; they ſee the great difficulty of getting the *Teſt* Repealed: And withal, they doubt whether it is their Intereſt that it ſhould be Repealed or not: They fear needy violent men might get into Employments who would put His Majeſty on doing things that might ruine them and their Poſterity. They are certainly in the right of it. It is good to provide for the worſt. A Revolution will come with a Witneſs; and its like it may come before the Prince of *Wales* be of Age to manage an unruly Spirit, that I fear will accompany it. Humane Nature can hardly digeſt what it is already neceſſitated to ſwallow, ſuch provocations even alters mens Judgments. I find that men who otherways hate ſeverity, begin to be of Opinion that Queen *Elizabeths Lenity* to the *R. C's* proves now cruelty to the Proteſtants. The whole Body of Proteſtants in the Nation, was lately afraid of a *Popiſh Succeſſor*, and when they Reflected on Queen *Maries* Reign, thought we had already ſufficient Experience of the Spirit of that Religion; and took Self-preſervation to be a good Argument, for preventing a ſecond Tryal. But now a handful of *Roman Catholicks*, perhaps reflecting on Queen *Elizabeths* Reign, are not it ſeems afraid of *Proteſtant Succeſſors*. But if ſome Proteſtants at that time from an Averſion to the Remedy, hop'd that the Diſeaſe was not ſo dangerous as it proves. I am confident at preſent, all Proteſtants are agreed, that henceforward the Nation muſt be ſaved, not by Faith. And therefore I would adviſe the *R. C's* to conſider that Proteſtants are ſtill men, that late Experiences at home, and the Cruelties of *Popiſh* Princes abroad, has given us a very terrible *Idea* of their Religion. That Opportunity is precious and very ſlippery, and if they let the preſent Occaſion paſs by, they can hardly ever hope that it will be poſſible for them to recover it. That their Fathers and Grandfathers would have thought themſelves in Heaven to have had ſuch an offer as this is, in any of the four laſt Reigns, and therefore, that they had better be contented with *Half a Loaf, than no Bread.* I mean it will be their Wiſdom to embrace this Golden Occaſion of putting themſelves on a level with all other *Engliſh*-men; at leaſt as to their private Capacity; and to diſarm once for all, the Severity of thoſe Laws; which if ever they ſhould come to be in good earneſt Executed by a Proteſtant Succeſſor, will make *England* too hot for them: And therefore I ſhould particularly adviſe thoſe among them, who have the Honour to approach His Majeſty, to uſe their Credit, to prevail with him to make this ſo neceſſary a ſtep in favour of the Nation; ſince the Succeſſors have advanc'd two Thirds of the way for effecting ſo good and pious a Work. Then, and not till then, the *R. C's* may think themſelves ſecured, and His Majeſty may hope to be great by Tranſlating Fear and Anger from the Breaſts of His Subjects, to the Hearts of His Own and the Nations Enemies.

But if an Evil Genius (which ſeems to have hovered over us now a long time) will have it otherwiſe; if I were a *R. C.* I would meddle no more, but live quiet at home, and Careſs my Proteſtant Neighbours; and in ſo doing, I ſhould think my ſelf better ſecured againſt the Reſentments of the Nation, than by all the Forces, Forts, Leagues, Garranties, and even *Men Children*, that His Majeſty may hope to leave behind him.

As for the Proteſtant Diſſenters, I am confident the Body of them will continue to behave themſelves like men, who to their great Honour have ever preferred the Love of their Country and Religion to all Dangers and Favours whatſoever, but there are both Weak and Intereſted men among all great numbers; I would have them conſider how much the ſtate of things is altered, upon the coming out of this Letter, for if hitherto they have been too forward in giving Ear to Propoſals on this miſtake, that they could never have ſuch a favourable Juncture, for getting the Laws againſt them Repealed; I hope now they are undeceived, ſince the Succeſſors have pawn'd their Faith and Honour for it, which I take to be a better ſecurity (as matters go at preſent) than the ſo much talked of *Magna Charta* for Liberty of Conſcience would be, though got in a legal way; for our Judges have declared, That Princes can diſpence with the Obligation of Laws, but they have not yet given their Opinion, that they can diſpence with the Honour of their Word; nor have their Highneſſes any Confeſſor to ſupply ſuch an Omiſſion.

However it is not to be charg'd on their Highneſſes, if ſuch a *Magna Charta* be not at preſent given them, provided the Teſt be let alone; but I fear the *Roman* Catholicks Zeal

will

will have all or nothing; and the Test too must be Repealed by wheedling the Dissenters to joyn with willing Sheriffs in violating the Rights of Elections, which are the Root of the Liberties of *England*; a prudent way of recommending their Religion to all true *English-men*.

But if any of the Dissenters be so destitute of Sense and Honesty, as to prefer a *Magna Charta*, so obtained Void and Null in it self, to their own Honour and Conscience, to the Love and Liberties of their Countrey, to the present Kindness of all good Men, and their Countenance at another time, and above all, to the Favour and Word of the Successors, who have now so generously declared themselves for them; We may pronounce, that they are men abandoned to a Reprobate sense, who will justly deserve Infamy and the Hatred of the Nation at present, and its Resentments hereafter. Is it possible, that any Dissenter, who either deserves or loves the Reputation of an Honest Man, can be prevailed with by any pretences of Insinuations how plausible soever, to make so Odious and pernicious a bargain, as that of buying a precarious pretended Liberty of Conscience, at the price of the Civil Liberties of their Country, and at the price of removing that which under God is the most effectual Bar to keep us from the Dominion of a Religion, that would as soon as it could, force us to abandon our own, or reduce us to the Miserable Condition of those of our Neighbours, who are glad to forsake all they have in the World, that they may have their Souls and Lives for a prey.

As for the Church of *England*, their Clergy have of late oppos'd themselves to *Popery*, with so much Learning, Vigour, Danger and Success, that I think all honest Dissenters will lay down their Resentments against them, and look on that Church, as the present Bulwark and Honour of the Protestant Religion. I wish those high men among them, who have so long appropriated to themselves, the name and Authority of the Church of *England*, and have been made Instruments to bring about Designs, of which their present Behaviour convinces me, they were ignorant, as I suppose many of the Dissenters are, whose turn it is now to be the Tools.

I say, I wish such men would consider, to what a pass they have brought Matters by their Violences, or rather the Violences of these whose Property they were, and at length be wise; They cannot but be sensible of the Advantages they receive by this Letter. I suppose they apprehend (I am sure they ought to do it) that the Ruine of their Church is resolv'd on: But if the Dissenters upon this Letter withdraw themselves, the *R. C's* have neither Hearts to keep firm to to such a Resolution, nor Hands to Execute it.

Since therefore, They themselves, have unhappily brought their Church into such Precepies by provoking the Dissenters, it is in a particular manner their Duty, as well as their Interest, to endeavour to soften them, by assisting the Letter, and promoting the Design of it.

But if the old leaven still remain, and they continue to argue as formerly, if the Surplice be parted with, the Church of *England* is lost; if the Penal Laws be repealed, the Test will follow: and comfort themselves with this most Christian reflection, that the R. C. will not accept of what is offered them; such men deserve all the misery that is preparing for them, and will perish without Pity, and give thinking Men occasion to remember the Proverb, *Beat a Fool* (or a Zealot) *in a Morter, yet his Foolishness will not depart from him.* But the Dissenters ought not to be much concerned at this, they have their own Bigots, and the Church of *England* theirs; there will be Tools whilst there are Workmen.

This is a time for Wisdom to be justifyed of her Children, when honest men ought to leave off minding the lesser Interests of this or that particular Church, and joyn in securing the common Interest of the Protestant Religion. And to conclude, I would particularly beg of the Dissenters to make use of their best Judgment on this so critical an occasion, which they will do in my opinion, in keeping close to the contents of this Letter, by endeavouring to obtain in a fair and legal way such a Liberty to all Perswasions, as is the Natural Right of Freemen, and as our Protestant Successors declare themselves willing to joyn in; and if those who have an equal, nay a greater Interest than themselves, will not agree to such a Liberty, because they will be Masters or nothing; the Dissenters will have the comfort of having discharged their own Consciences, as prudent Men and good Christians ought to do, and may safely trust God with the Event.

Sir, I thought I had made an end, but looking your Letter over again, I find I have forgot to answer a reason or two you give, why you doubt whether the Letter be truely M. *Fagels*: You are informed (you say) that such and such Great Men doubted of it; but some might as well pretend to doubt of the Truth of that Letter, (tho they knew it to be true) as believe Her Majesty to be with Child, almost before she knew it Her self; and that she was quick, when the Embryo, as Anatomists say, is not much above an Inch long; I don't think that Popish Successors, like certain weeds, grow faster than others: The Persons you name may Trim, and presume on their Merit, least they might be thought capable of Resentment. A dangerous Reflection. I say their Merit; you have seen a long relation of the great services some (when they were in power) did their Highnesses; it is bound up with a relation of the true causes of their sufferings for their (or rather their Highnesses) Religion. You know even how one of them the last Summer payed them his reverence with all the Respect and Humility of a due distance, and with the same caution with which the Invincible Monarch fights out of Cannon shot. But Sir though the character of a Trimmer be ordinarily the character of a Prudent Man, there are times and seasons when it is not the Character of an Honest Man.

I acknowledge that since their Highnesses Marriage, nothing has hapned so much for the good of the Protestant Interest as this Letter of M. *Fagels*, and if I had been either the Writer or Adviser of it, I should be very proud of it, and think the Nation much in my debt. But Sir that was not a very good reason to make you doubt of it; for a good cause will have its time, tho not so often as a bad one, which hath ordinarily the Majority on its side.

I am confident at present we have all the reason in the world to expect it, for my own part, though I am neither young nor strong, I hope to live to see a day of Jubilee in *England* for all that deserve it; when honest men shall have the same pleasure in thinking on these times, that a Woman happily delivered hath in reflecting on the pain and danger she was in. But Knaves shall remember them, as I am told the damned to their Sins, Cursing both them and themselves.

Sir I am

January 12. 1688. Yours.